

been waiting for the administration to take action to ensure that the composition of the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health is adjusted so that it will more fairly examine workers' claims, but the administration has failed to act. Sadly, I fear that, to a great extent, these actions are the result of conscious decisions by certain agency officials.

Since the Department of Labor's mission is to foster and promote the welfare of American workers, I hoped to work with the Department to ensure that the quiet heroes of the Rocky Flats petition were compensated. However, I have struggled to find common ground, and for some of these workers, time is running out. Moreover, hearings held by the House Judiciary Committee have left me with serious questions regarding their efforts to undermine the Rocky Flats and other SEC petitions in the name of cost containment and other shameful actions.

I hope to discuss these questions with Mr. Sequeira and other administration officials and to get some firm commitments about cleaning up this process, moving forward fairly, and getting the Rocky Flats petition approved. Until then, I cannot in good faith allow this nomination to proceed.

INDIAN HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT AMENDMENTS OF 2006

Mr. DORGAN, Mr. President, earlier today I spoke on the Senate floor about the need to pass the Indian Health Care Improvement Reauthorization bill. My colleagues, Senator McCAIN and Senator ENZI, have worked long and hard over the past several weeks to address the many objections that have been raised by the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Those negotiations have brought clarity to the positions of the administration and have helped to define how legislation can best address the health crisis in Indian country. In an effort to memorialize those discussions, I am joining Senators McCAIN and ENZI in cosponsoring the Indian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments of 2006. The bill being introduced tonight reflects, to a significant extent, the bill that the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs approved in October 2005. It also reflects the many hours of negotiations and meetings with the administration, the Indian Affairs Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. In spite of the dedication of all those involved, however, the bill reflects progress but not perfection.

I have talked to the tribal leaders who are advocates for Indian health care improvements about this bill. They, too, are pleased that we have made some progress. But they, too, feel there have been too many compromises and we must begin with a fresh view of how to improve the health care of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

When the 110th Congress convenes in January, I intend to work with Indian Country and my colleagues in the Senate and in the House to produce a bill that will put solutions for Indian people front and center. We have spent far too much time these past 8 years focusing on legalistic issues rather than on human needs. I thank Senator McCAIN and Senator ENZI for their leadership in bringing us to this important juncture and I look forward to working with them over the next 2 years to reauthorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE PRIVATE DEBT COLLECTION PROGRAM

Mr. BAUCUS. The American Jobs Creation Act of 2004 authorized the IRS to hire private debt collection agencies to collect delinquent taxes. An IRS pilot program was initiated this year, and the IRS expects to expand the program in early 2007.

It is important that the program be administered by the IRS in a fair and responsible manner. Senator NELSON has proposed legislation, already unanimously passed by the Senate, which would ensure 10 percent of the employees assigned to the IRS contract by the private agencies are persons with disabilities. This will not affect the ability of the private contractors to collect delinquent taxes, but it will greatly affect the ability of persons with disabilities to find gainful employment that will promote their independence and well-being.

I commend Senator NELSON for his commitment to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities. I pledge to work with both of my good friends, Senator NELSON and Senator GRASSLEY, in the next session of Congress to support his efforts.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. I thank my good friend, Senator BAUCUS.

As my colleague knows, this legislation passed the Senate unanimously in November 2005 but unfortunately failed to be included in a conference report. It will create meaningful employment for persons with disabilities and disabled veterans in the field of third-party debt collection.

Especially with the large numbers of returning disabled veterans, employment opportunities are urgently needed. Generally, the employment opportunities for persons with disabilities are not great—1 in 10 Americans has a disability and the rate of unemployment is 70 to 80 percent. These private debt collection jobs are essentially highly paid call center jobs with annual incomes averaging \$40,000 and often come with good health benefits and 401(k) plans.

This legislation is necessary since in letters and conversations with the Department of Treasury and Internal Revenue Service they have stated that under existing GSA rules, they cannot set a specific number of awards aside

for contractors employing significant numbers of persons with disabilities. My understanding is the GSA currently allows a preference for a business that is owned by a disabled veteran, but it does not also allow a preference for a business that employs several persons with disabilities. This is an oversight which needs to be corrected.

This legislation is supported by the Disabled American Veterans, the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the American Association of People With Disabilities, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Mr. BAUCUS. I support Senator NELSON's efforts to create opportunities that will employ persons with disabilities and am hopeful that these efforts can be in place before the IRS issues the next Request for Quotes in March 2007. I look forward to working with my colleagues and with the relevant agencies on this important matter.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. I thank my colleague and good friend from Montana for his commitment to such an important effort.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate immediately proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations on today's Executive Calendar: Calendar Nos. 62, 63, 407, 670, 783, 900, 901, 904, 1000, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005 through 1008, 1010, 1011, 1012, 1013, 1014, 1017, 1018, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1022, 1023, 1024, and all nominations on the Secretary's desk.

I further ask consent that the following committees be discharged from further consideration of listed nominations and the Senate proceed to their consideration en bloc:

Judiciary Committee, Rachel Paulose PN1905; Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Paul Schneider PN2127; Foreign Relations, Dianne Moss PN1846, foreign service promotion lists PN 2097, PN 2130, and PN 2085.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask continued unanimous consent for the Commerce Committee, Steven Chealander PN2062; Charles Dorkey III, PN2112; Rear Admiral Coogan PN 2086; Raymond Slagle PN 2093; NOAA promotion list, PN2094, Gregg Versaw, PN2131; Coast Guard promotion list 2154; Coast Guard officer list, PN2185; Agriculture Committee, Mark Keenum, PN2110 and PN 2109; Leland Strom, PN1864; the following nominations from the HELP Committee with PN numbers as designated: PN2126, PN2095, PN2096, PN2084, PN2165, PN2166, PN1762, PN1921, PN1732, PN2119, PN2120, PN2121, PN2122, PN2123, PN 2124,